

# MONTANA

## Economy at a Glance

### Healthcare and Personal Care Occupations

By Julie O'Connor

It is becoming common knowledge that the U.S. is facing a nursing shortage. As the "baby boomer" generation begins to reach retirement age, two factors will contribute to this shortage. First, many nurses will retire. Second, more and more people will need healthcare, especially in nursing homes and assisted living centers.

Montana is no exception to this increased need for healthcare and personal care professionals. In fact, Montana's population ranks as the fifth "oldest" state in the nation (tying with Pennsylvania), with a median age of 39.0 years. According to 2003 census estimates, baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) account for nearly 30% of Montana's population. Add to this the population aged 59 and older, and you find almost half (48.53%) of the state's citizens becoming of age for increased healthcare needs. According to our 2002-2012 job projections, Montana will have openings for 1,146 nurses, medical assistants, and aides per year.

This article is the second installment in our Occupations A to Z series, which highlights high-growth occupations in Montana. The article continues on page two, describing duties, educational requirements, and median wages for five healthcare and personal care occupations.

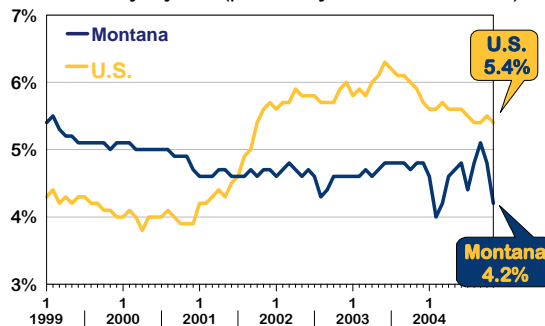
### Earnings

Average weekly earnings for Montana's private sector workers reached \$424.31 in November\*, up from \$423.75 in November 2003. This average marks an over-the-year increase of 0.1%. The Consumer Price Index (an indicator of U.S. inflation) increased by 3.5% over-the-year.

\*November 2004 rate preliminary

### Unemployment

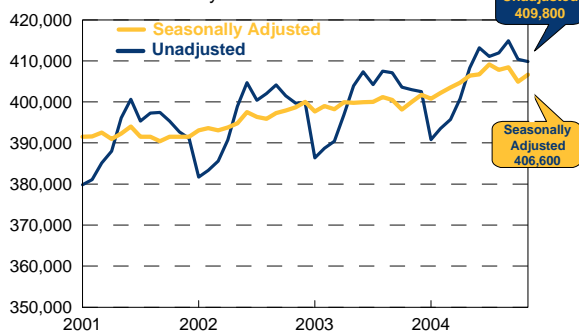
Seasonally adjusted (preliminary November 2004 data)



Montana's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped 0.6 percentage points to 4.2% for November, while the U.S. rate fell slightly to 5.4%, from 5.5% in October.

### Nonfarm Employment Series

January 2001 - November 2004



Montana's seasonally-adjusted, nonagricultural payroll employment was up about 6,600 jobs (1.7%) over-the-year for November. The largest over-the-year gains were in construction, which was up by 1,900 jobs (8.4%); education and health service, up 1,200 jobs (2.2%); financial activities, up 1,100 jobs (5.4%), professional & business services, up 1,000 jobs (3.0%), and natural resources and mining, up 900 jobs (14.5%).

### Employment by Industry

Industry Employment (in thousands)	Nov. 2004	Nov. 2003	Net Change	Percent Change
Total Non-Agricultural	406.6	400.0	6.6	1.7%
Natural Resources & Mining	7.1	6.2	0.9	14.5%
Construction	24.5	22.6	1.9	8.4%
Manufacturing	18.4	18.3	0.1	0.5%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	84.8	84.7	0.1	0.1%
Information*	7.6	7.4	0.2	2.7%
Financial Activities	21.4	20.3	1.1	5.4%
Professional & Business Services	33.9	32.9	1.0	3.0%
Education & Health Services	54.6	53.4	1.2	2.2%
Leisure & Hospitality	52.2	52.4	-0.2	-0.4%
Other Services*	16.3	16.0	0.3	1.9%
Total Government	85.8	85.8	0.0	0.0%

\*These series are not seasonally adjusted

### Unemployment by County

Not seasonally adjusted

	Nov. 2004*	Nov. 2003
UNITED STATES	5.2%	5.6%
MONTANA	4.2%	4.8%
Cascade **	4.0%	4.7%
Missoula **	3.4%	3.7%
Yellowstone **	3.1%	3.5%
Beaverhead	3.1%	3.2%
Big Horn	12.5%	12.9%
Blaine	4.8%	5.9%
Broadwater	3.2%	6.4%
Carbon	4.6%	4.0%
Carter	2.1%	1.4%
Chouteau	2.8%	3.2%
Custer	2.5%	2.6%
Daniels	2.0%	2.4%
Dawson	2.2%	2.2%
Deer Lodge	7.4%	7.4%
Fallon	2.7%	3.1%
Fergus	4.6%	4.7%
Flathead	5.9%	7.2%
Gallatin	3.2%	3.7%
Garfield	3.1%	2.2%
Glacier	12.2%	12.6%
Golden Valley	7.3%	8.9%
Granite	4.9%	6.7%
Hill	3.9%	3.4%
Jefferson	3.3%	4.3%
Judith Basin	4.0%	4.6%
Lake	5.6%	6.5%
Lewis & Clark	3.8%	3.5%
Liberty	3.0%	3.1%
Lincoln	10.7%	13.8%
McCone	0.7%	1.7%
Madison	3.0%	3.8%
Meagher	5.4%	5.7%
Mineral	7.8%	8.3%
Musselshell	6.2%	6.9%
Park	5.4%	5.7%
Petroleum	2.4%	4.3%
Phillips	3.4%	4.5%
Pondera	5.3%	5.1%
Powder River	1.9%	2.9%
Powell	6.5%	4.4%
Prairie	2.4%	5.8%
Ravalli	4.8%	6.1%
Richland	2.5%	3.4%
Roosevelt	8.3%	7.8%
Rosebud	5.5%	6.6%
Sanders	6.3%	7.0%
Sheridan	1.7%	3.8%
Silver Bow	4.4%	4.9%
Stillwater	2.6%	3.0%
Sweet Grass	1.8%	2.1%
Teton	3.3%	3.3%
Toole	2.6%	2.2%
Treasure	3.3%	2.7%
Valley	3.2%	3.5%
Wheatland	3.7%	4.3%
Wibaux	2.6%	2.0%

\*November 2004 rate preliminary

\*\* Cascade=Great Falls MSA

Missoula=Missoula MSA

Yellowstone=Billings MSA

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November 2004

# Montana Economy at a Glance



## Occupations A to Z: Spotlight on Healthcare and Personal Care Occupations



*By Julie O'Connor*

**Personal and home care aides** provide services to elderly, disabled, and ill clients so they can live in their own homes. Most aides work with elderly or disabled clients who need more care than family or friends can provide. Some aides work with families in which a parent is ill and small children need care. Others help patients who are discharged from the hospital and have short-term needs.

In general, personal and home care aides provide housekeeping and personal care services. They clean clients' houses, do laundry, and change bed linens. Some aides plan meals (including special diets), shop for food, and cook. Aides also help clients get out of bed, go to the bathroom, bathe, dress, and groom. Some assist clients with errands outside the home, such as taking them to doctor's appointments or grocery shopping.

**Medical assistants** help care for patients and perform a limited number of basic medical duties, such as recording a patient's weight, pulse rate, blood pressure, and other vital signs. They explain treatments to patients and prepare them for exams. Assistants assist doctors during exams by handing them materials and preparing medications. They collect and prepare laboratory specimens, and may perform basic lab tests. Medical assistants also instruct patients about medication and special diets. Additional duties may include drawing blood, preparing patients for x-rays, taking EKGs, changing bandages, and removing stitches. After exams, assistants clean the room, dispose of used materials, arrange equipment, and sterilize used instruments. They take classes to keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date.

### Home health aides

More and more people are finding that home care is less expensive than hospital care. In addition, it may help patients recover more quickly from surgery or illness. Home health aides provide the treatment patients need at home when their families are unable to help out.

Home health aides follow doctors', nurses', or therapists' orders when providing care. They give clients their medication, and check their pulse, temperature, and respiration rates. For some clients, home health aides help them perform simple exercises, and may massage sore muscles and apply treatments such as ointments or heating pads. In addition, aides may help clients get out of bed, go to the bathroom, bathe, dress, and groom.

Home health aides may clean clients' houses, do their laundry, and change their linens. They plan and prepare nutritious meals that follow clients' special diets. Home health aides run errands for clients, or assist them in running their own errands. In addition to caring for clients, home health aides instruct them and offer support. They may train someone who has been in an accident in using adaptive tools. They may entertain, read aloud, or play cards and other games with clients. Home health aides work with clients on a daily, weekly, or ongoing basis. They may form relationships with clients and be there to listen to their problems.

**Nursing assistants** give personal care to patients in hospitals and nursing homes, working under the direction of nurses and doctors. When they come to work, nursing assistants check with the supervising nurse and read chart notes for instructions and updates about each patient. They greet patients and see how they are doing. Nursing assistants answer call bells and help patients with bedpans or other needs. They deliver messages, flowers, and gifts.

Nursing assistants prepare food trays and deliver meals. They keep records of the amount of food eaten and liquid output. They often give medicines to patients as directed by the supervising nurse or doctor. They help patients with eating, dressing, bathing, and walking. Nursing assistants clean rooms and change beds. When patients must stay in bed, nursing assistants give them bed baths and change the bed linens afterward. They help patients clean their teeth and wash and brush their hair. They help patients turn over in bed, and give lotion or alcohol rubs to help keep skin healthy and provide comfort.

Nursing assistants set up and monitor equipment. They record vital signs such as blood pressure, temperature, pulse, and respiration. They move patients in wheelchairs or beds to examining or operating rooms. Nursing assistants sterilize equipment and supplies, and prepare and stock dressings and treatment trays.

**Licensed practical nurses (LPN's)** work under the direction of a doctor or registered nurse. Most LPN's provide basic bedside care to patients. They take vital signs such as temperature, blood pressure, pulse, and respiration. They treat patients for bedsores, give alcohol rubs, and apply dressing, hot water bottles, and ice packs. LPN's feed patients and record their food and liquid intake and output. They also help patients with other personal care activities, such as bathing,

dressing, or brushing their teeth. Where the law allows them to, LPN's may give prescribed medications. They may also administer intravenous (IV) fluids. Some LPN's help deliver, care for, and feed infants. Experienced LPN's may supervise nursing assistants and aides.

**Registered nurses (RN's)** work to promote health and to help patients cope with illness. Nurses work with patients in hospitals, in doctors' offices, and in nursing homes. They work in public health facilities such as government agencies and schools. They also take care of patients in their homes as they recover from illness or accidents. Registered nurses have a large variety of tasks they can perform. However, the work setting usually determines their daily duties.

Hospital nurses observe patients and carry out medical treatments. They use computerized equipment to monitor patients' vital signs. They record their observations and other medical data in patients' charts. Nurses also consult with medical staff about ways to prevent infection. Sometimes nurses write and manage patient care plans. Hospital nurses are usually assigned to one area, such as surgery. In these areas they have special duties. For example, surgery nurses prepare rooms and supplies before surgery. They sterilize instruments and prepare other equipment. They assist surgeons by passing instruments and other items. They also supervise LPN's, nursing assistants, and aides.

Office nurses prepare patients for exams and check vital signs. They assist doctors with exams when requested. They draw blood and give injections, as do nurses in most settings. Office nurses may also perform routine lab tests and office work.

Public health nurses work to improve the overall health of communities. They provide health care and first aid. They give shots and screenings such as blood pressure tests. Public health nurses develop health education programs. Thus, they teach the public about topics such as nutrition and childcare. In addition, they refer patients to community agencies.

Nursing home nurses manage the health care of residents. They spend much of their time on administrative and supervisory tasks. For example, they write care plans, and supervise LPN's in carrying them out. Home health nurses provide prescribed nursing care to patients in their own homes. They also instruct patients and their families on how to perform necessary procedures.

### How Do Healthcare and Personal Care Professionals Learn Their Trade?

**Registered nurses** have three training options. First, they can seek an Associate of Science in Nursing degree (A.S.N.) from a community or two-year college. Second, they can earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (B.S.N.) from a college or university offering a four-year program. Third, they can earn a diploma from a hospital offering a two- to three-year program. In general, graduates of any of the three types of programs qualify for entry-level positions. However, they must also pass national and state exams. Nurses who have a bachelor's degree tend to have more job options.

Nursing students study anatomy, physiology, and chemistry. Near the end of training, they complete a supervised work experience in a hospital. During this clinical work experience, nursing students work in several hospital departments, such as surgery, emergency, and pediatrics. All states require RNs to be licensed, and the Montana State Board of Nursing provides certification for advanced practice nursing occupations, which includes nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, clinical nurse specialist, and nurse midwife. Licensing and certification requirements vary from state to state.

**Licensed practical nurse** training may be obtained at a professional technical school or two-year college. Some high schools and hospitals also offer this training. Most practical nursing programs take one year to complete. They include classroom study and supervised clinical practice (patient care). Classroom study includes anatomy, physiology, nutrition, and first aid. As part of their patient care studies, they learn to administer drugs to patients. An LPN may become an RN by completing additional college coursework (two years in most cases) at an institution offering an A.S.N. degree. Transferrability of credits varies by school.

**Home health aides and personal & home care aides** must have a high school diploma or GED, complete a training program, and have good interpersonal skills. In addition, if your employer receives money from Medicare, you must pass competency exams. Most aides receive training on the job. Training may last up to 75 hours. Aides learn to read vital signs and help patients with their personal hygiene. They also learn safe transfer techniques and infection control procedures.

Occupation	Total Annual Openings	Training Level Required
Personal & Home Care Aides	150	On-the-job
Medical Assistants	63	On-the-job
Home Health Aides	125	On-the-job
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, & Attendants	176	On-the-job
Licensed Practical Nurses	383	Associate Degree
Registered Nurses	322	Associate/Bachelor's Degree

## “Healthcare and Personal Care Occupations” (continued)

**Nursing assistants** must complete a formal training program. Training programs are offered at high schools, professional technical schools, and two-year colleges. In these programs, students learn anatomy and physiology, infection control, and nutrition. They also learn how to help patients bathe, eat, and groom. Some employers provide classroom training for nursing assistants. Others rely on experienced nurses to give on-the-job training. This type of training may last from several days up to a few months. Nursing assistants may also attend workshops, lectures, and in-service trainings.

**Medical assistants** do not need a license. However, some employers require medical assistants to take a training program or an exam before doing certain procedures, such as drawing blood, giving injections, and taking x-rays.

### Want more information like this for other occupations?

Simply log on to the Research and Analysis Bureau's website at [www.ourfactsyourfuture.org](http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org), and click “Occupation Explorer” on the drop-down menu of the “Labor Market Information” tab.

You'll find a brief description of the duties and task involved in each occupation, information on job projections, wages, top industries of employment, licensing requirements, training programs, associated skills, and a job search feature using America's Job Bank or Montana Job Source.

### How Much Do Healthcare and Personal Care Professionals Earn in Montana?

Occupation	Median Monthly Wage	Median Hourly Wage	Middle Wage Range* (Monthly)	Middle Wage Range* (Hourly)
Personal & Home Care Aids	\$1,336	\$7.71	\$1,205 to \$1,456	\$6.95 to \$8.40
Home Health Aids	\$1,439	\$8.30	\$1,277 to \$1,726	\$7.37 to \$9.96
Medical Assistants	\$1,810	\$10.44	\$1,607 to \$2,127	\$9.27 to \$12.27
Licensed Practical Nurses	\$2,195	\$12.66	\$1,935 to \$2,460	\$11.16 to \$14.19
Registered Nurses	\$3,429	\$19.78	\$2,925 to \$3,950	\$15.50 to \$27.76

\*The middle 50% of the total wage range for each occupation

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